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UZBEKISTAN

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Imam Promotes Education in the Community

Local Religious Leader a Close Counterpart in a USAID Basic Education Program



Imam Shokirzhon Valiev with parents at school #12.

Photo:PEAKS

“We should all come together to make [the USAID PEAKS program] work, and I will pray to Allah for help in this vital endeavor.”

-Imam Shokirzhon Valiev

Telling Our Story

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At the mosque of the village of Barzangi, education is an important theme of Imam Shokirzhon Valiev's Friday sermon. Among words of mercy and compassion, he raises the issues of access to education for disabled and disenfranchised children, education quality, and the involvement of parents and community in school. Like other small village imams in Uzbekistan, he is highly esteemed by his fellow villagers; his advice and mentorship are sought, and his opinion valued.

In 2003, when USAID launched its new basic education initiative called Participation, Education, and Knowledge Strengthening (PEAKS), Shokirzhon's efforts to promote education expanded far beyond his sermon. PEAKS is aimed at improving the quality of education through teacher training in internationally recognized methodologies, involvement of parents and other stakeholders in education decision-making, strengthening the local capacity for education management, and providing assistance for school infrastructure rehabilitation. In Uzbekistan, 11 schools were selected as pilot sites for the program. In 2004, each of these schools began to serve as training and resource centers for an additional 10-12 schools in the surrounding area surrounding them.

In the village of Barzangi in the Ferghana region, School #12 was selected as a pilot school with an expanded community involvement component; bringing parents, educators, and other stakeholders together to address school needs. As an active member of the PEAKS Community Education Committee (CEC), which is comprised of representatives of the village school, education authorities, parents, and community leaders, Shokirzhon became involved in a series of training seminars and later a comprehensive door-to-door survey of school enrollment and attendance. The collected data helped the CEC identify the exact causes of non-attendance and define concrete measures to address the issues identified and develop a comprehensive plan for future fundraising and resource management.

Shokirzhon is a frequent guest at School #12. From him, children learn about virtue and mercy, as well as about issues facing other children in their community and the work that's being done to give everyone access to good education. Children and their parents listen to Shokirzhon as he talks about the value of education and the importance of attending school every day. In a country where schools close for cotton picking season and a large number of kids work at bazaars during school hours, it's a vital message.

Shokirzhon is a keen believer in the success of the USAID PEAKS program. He urges his neighbors, mahalla leaders, authorities, parents, and school teachers to put forward their best effort to assist PEAKS. “We should all come together to make it work,” says the Shokirzhon, “and I will pray to Allah for help in this vital endeavor”.